

KIM BERANEK TESTIMONY for HB 490 to HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE 2/14/2011

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS KIM BERANEK AND I COME BEFORE YOU AS A MOTHER OF AN ADULT WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES. MY DAUGHTER, JENNY, WAS BORN 31 YEARS AGO AFTER HAVING A MASSIVE BRAIN ANEURISM WHILE IN THE WOMB. AFTER REVIVING HER THEY GAVE HER LITTLE HOPE, AS SHE SCORED ONLY A 4 ON THE APGAR TEST, AND HAD NUMEROUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS. SHE WAS KEPT IN INTENSIVE CARE FOR 5 DAYS UNTIL SHE STABILIZED. SHE SUFFERED EXTENSIVE BRAIN DAMAGE TO THE RIGHT FRONTAL LOBE OF HER BRAIN, AND EVENTUALLY WAS DIAGNOSED WITH HAVING A SEIZURE DISORDER [LEFT-SIDED/FOCAL] AND MODERATE TO SEVERE MENTAL RETARDATION. THE PROGNOSIS WAS THAT SHE WOULD NEVER PROGRESS BEYOND THE AGE OF A 2 TO 3 YEAR OLD.

THIS WAS A CHALLENGE TO MY FAITH, BECAUSE I HAD BELIEVED THAT WHEN SHE WAS REVIVED, SHE WAS TOTALLY HEALED. I WENT THROUGH A GRIEVING/ANGER PROCESS, UNTIL I CAME TO THE REALIZATION THAT SHE WAS TOTAL AND PERFECT FOR HER PURPOSE IN THIS LIFE. WHEN THE WORLD LOOKS AT A RAINBOW, IT SEES ONLY ONE SMALL PART OF THE WHOLE. FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE THE RAINBOW IS A WHOLE-COMplete-PERFECT-BEAUTIFUL CIRCLE. WHEN THE WORLD LOOKS AT JEN, SOME MIGHT SEE 'THE LACK'. OR LESS THEN WHOLE. FROM GOD'S AND OUR (MY HUSBAND AND I) PERSPECTIVE SHE IS TOTAL, WHOLE, COMPLETE, AND PERFECT.

JEN HAS EXCEEDED ALL GOALS AND LIMITS PUT BEFORE HER. I BELIEVE HER PURPOSE IN LIFE HAS BEEN TO BE A GREAT TEACHER OF LIFE AND LIVING. SHE'S MASTERED PATIENCE [ex. She was 13 when she finally learned to tie her shoes!], KINDNESS, JOY & SENSE OF HUMOR (ex. Some of her first words were when she patted her father on his head as he was tucking her in bed and said, "No hair!"), FAITHFULNESS (ex. every day she says she is our bff - best friends, forever), HUMILITY (ex. Although she can dress herself, and can use the microwave, she still needs help taking care of personal hygiene tasks), SELF CONTROL (ex. When either of us start to get frustrated, our 'code' phrase is, "You be good, and I'll be soft"), AND UNCONDITIONAL LOVE (ex. She cannot stand to be out of fellowship with us - shows immediate remorse when she knows she has done something wrong, and immediate forgiveness, too).

JEN WORKS AT FLATHEAD INDUSTRIES, SINGS AT CHURCH WITH THE WORSHIP TEAM, IS QUITE AN ATHLETE IN SEVERAL SPORTS FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS. SHE HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN HER COMMUNITY.

THIS PAST SUMMER I WAS GETTING TO KNOW MY NEIGHBOR AS WE WORKED IN MY GARDEN. I SHARED WITH HER THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF JENNY'S BIRTH. HER RESPONSE, "WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER IF THEY HAD JUST 'LET HER GO'?" I WAS ASTOUNDED AND ASKED, "BETTER? FOR WHO?" IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR JEN... SHE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN HERE....

IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR JIM, MY HUSBAND, OR ME. WHAT SHE HAS GIVEN US EVERYDAY OF HER LIFE HAS NOT BEEN A BURDEN, BUT HAS BEEN BLESSING AFTER BLESSING.

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF 'JENNYS' IN THIS STATE OF MONTANA. LIFE LESSONS THEY CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SOCIETY CANNOT BE PURCHASED WITH MONEY OR MEASURED BY THE WORLD'S STANDARDS FOR SUCCESS. THEY ARE PRICELESS. LIFE IS PRICELESS. PLEASE CONSIDER THESE THINGS WHEN LOOKING AT THE PERSONHOOD AMENDMENT BEFORE YOU.

THANK YOU.